

Victorian Studies Association of Ontario



September 2015

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1. The President's Message

In the late summer of 2005, I arrived in Toronto from California to take up a position as assistant professor at York University. Someone, probably one of my new colleagues, invited me to an evening lecture by Bernie Lightman, and before long, the VSAO's annual cycle of events — its evening lectures, its April conference, its much-loved sherry hour — became regular elements in the rhythm of my academic year. So I feel particularly honoured to find myself now serving as the association's president for the 2015-17 term. One of my goals is that the VSAO might continue to be as welcoming to scholars at every level and across the disciplines as it was to me ten years ago.

Our year begins with a fall-term evening lecture, “‘A New Tongue for Art’: William Morris’s Revolutionary Literature,” by one of our long-time members, David Latham (York University). A specialist in pre-Raphaelite poetics, aesthetics, and politics, Professor Latham is also the editor of the *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*. In the winter term, we welcome Kate Lawson (University of Waterloo), an expert on British novels of the 1840s and 50s. Professor Lawson’s evening lecture will draw on her new research project on authorship and the Brontë sisters.

In April, we look forward to our annual conference, and especially to the two keynote

speakers chosen by our executive. [Professor Rachel Ablow](#) (SUNY Buffalo), the author of *Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot*, has written extensively on feeling, sympathy, and passion; her talk for us will draw on her current research on the Victorian representation of pain. [Professor Jules Law](#) (Northwestern University) is the author of *The Rhetoric of Empiricism* and *The Social Life of Fluids: Blood, Milk, and Water in the Victorian Novel*; his current research investigates nineteenth-century technologies of virtual experience.

If you're an existing member, I hope that you'll join us for one or more of these events — and if you're coming across our association for the first time, feel free to be in touch with me at <tinayc@Tyorku.ca> or with our association secretary, Alison Halsall <ahalsall@Tyorku.ca>, for further information about membership and future events.

Tina Young Choi

2. 2015-2016 VSAO Evening Lectures

[David Latham](#) will be delivering our first Evening Lecture on Thursday 5 November at 7:30pm. It will be entitled “‘A New Tongue for Art’: William Morris’s Revolutionary Literature.” Koffler House 108 (Koffler House sits in the northeast quadrant of the Spadina Crescent, and is marked “KP” on [the University of Toronto campus map \(click to open map\)](#).)

[Kate Lawson](#) will giving an evening lecture in Winter 2016 on her work on the Bronte sisters and authorship. Details are forthcoming.

3. VSAO/ACCUTE Call for Papers

Victorians Faking It: Fraud in Form and Fiction

University of Calgary, May 28-31, 2016

Is “faking it” an essential Victorian characteristic? Despite the popular perception of the nineteenth century as a period dominated by the Protestant work ethic and preoccupied with moral conscientiousness and “realism,” Victorian culture bursts with deception and trickery – both in form and content. From misleading plots and authorial pseudonyms to the illusory reality of emerging technologies like photography, identifying the (in)authentic and enacting (in)authenticity is an ongoing concern of nineteenth-century characters, spectators, and readers. For consumers of texts, a certain enjoyment may arise from discovering and tacitly participating in violations of generic and social norms. Alternately, reveling in ruses or quietly “passing” as another class, gender, race, or religion may be crucial for success or even survival, whether as a character or author, or within society at large. Deception may be the hidden impulse that sets Victorian propriety in motion, from the practice of “Bunburying,” to the scandal of the Tichborne claimant, to cases of quackery, to the fascination with discovering the figures behind George Eliot or Currer, Acton and Ellis Bell,

or the tangled identities in sensation novels like *Lady Audley's Secret*. This panel invites papers that explore questions of fraud and trickery in Victorian form and fiction.

Papers might address:

- Economic fraud, forgery, and counterfeiting
- Identity theft
- The bigamy plot
- Doubling and replications with a difference
- Shared identities
- Pseudonyms, authorship scandals, and impersonation of authors
- Collaboration and attributions of credit
- Anonymous reviewers and unsigned pieces
- “Passing” and impostor syndrome
- Secretive genres such as the silver fork novels, the roman à clef, sensation fiction
- Generic mimicry
- Unreliable narrators
- Optical illusions
- Photographic trickery and artistic forgeries and fakes

Questions and submissions should be sent to VSAOatACCUTE@gmail.com. Please submit the following as separate documents by 1 November 2015:

- a proposal of 300-500 words that has NO identifying marks for the author
- an abstract of 100 words and a bio of 50 words
- a 2016 Proposal Information Sheet, available at: <http://accute.ca/general-sessions/>

Please note that speakers must be members of VSAO and ACCUTE at the time of the conference. The second oldest Victorian studies association in the world, the Victorian Studies Association of Ontario welcomes new members from universities, libraries, museums – all those who share an interest in Victorian culture. For more information about VSAO, please visit <http://vsao.apps01.yorku.ca/>.

4. Report on VSAO-sponsored Panel at ACCUTE 2015

This year, “Victorian Inheritance” was the theme of the VSAO panel at the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English conference at the Congress of the Humanities, held on 30 May 2015 in Ottawa. Our first speaker, Susan Slattery (Art History, Toronto), noted intersections between portraiture and the popular press as modes of promoting the aristocracy in her paper “Primogeniture under Pressure: John Singer Sargent’s ‘Duke of Marlborough.’” Comparing two portraits of the ducal Marlborough family by John Reynolds (1778) and John Singer Sargent (1905), Slattery traced the evolution of symbolic coding from reinforcing ducal self-assurance to attempts to counteract media accounts of financial ruin and marital strife. In “The Bridegrooms of Christina Rossetti: Translating the ‘Religion of Love’,” our second speaker, Christine Choi (English, Toronto), explored the Victorian religious imaginary. Within her discussion, Choi also considered the means by

which Dante's poetry provided Rossetti with a means of considering literary heritage and her family's Italian "birthright." Our third and final speaker, Jonathan Vandor (English, York), considered the tension between economic and emerging evolutionary patterns of inheritance in "Margaret the Heiress": The Inheritance of Tradition in North and South" in order to probe at conceptions of altruism. Following the presentation of these three strong papers, a lively discussion ensued, interweaving strands of thought concerning familial, national, spiritual, and literary inheritance. Our thanks go out to the speakers for contributing insightful papers and to the panel attendees for their engaging and wide-ranging questions, which extended past the formal discussion period and onto the rainy streets of Ottawa.

Katherine Magyarody and Noa Reich
Department of English
University of Toronto

5. New Titles by VSAO Members

What a productive year for our members! Congratulations to all!

David Bentley. *A Scholarly Edition of Archibald Lampman's, Unfinished Fragment of a Novel*. London: Canadian Poetry Press, 2014.

—. *By Necessity and Indirection: Essays on Modernism in Canadian Literature*. Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 2015.

[Ann Colley. Wild Animal Skins in Victorian Britain: Zoos, Collections, Portraits, and Maps. Ashgate, 2015.](#)

[Donald S. Hair. Fresh Strange Music: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Language. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015.](#)

[Stephen Heathorn, Stephanie Barczewski, John Eglin, Michael Silvestri, Michelle Tusan. Britain since 1688: A Nation in the World. Routledge, 2015.](#)

[Leslie Howsam, ed. The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015.](#)

[Bernard Lightman, Richard England, and Catherine Marshall, eds. The Papers of the Metaphysical Society 1869-1880: A Critical Edition. 3 volumes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.](#)

[Victor Shea and William Whitla, eds. Victorian Literature: An Anthology. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.](#)